

## The Church Challenged

Study #4 of Galatians 2:1-10 by Bob Burrige ©2024

The book of Galatians was written to deal with problems that were troubling the early church.

The **gospel of Justification** by *Faith alone*, through *Christ alone*, because of *God's Grace alone*, was **under attack** from a few groups of people. *Some* of the attackers actually *claimed* to be God's people.

The **Jewish people** had been the **keepers of God's word** for hundreds of years.

But their **powerful and large Synagogues** had a **superficial understanding of the Bible**.

To them **God's special people** were just the **descendants of Abraham**.

**Gentiles who joined had to keep the laws of Moses. The males had to be circumcized.**

**The Jewish Synagogues**, were the **center of social life** for the community.

It's where **young single** men and women met one another, where **children** played with friends, where **men** planned business deals, and talked about politics and sports, where **women** could talk with one another about their personal interests and struggles.

These are **good things**, but **worship there** had been **corrupted**.

The **focus was shifting** to needs that centered on *personal benefits*, rather than the *grace of God*.

**The funds** they controlled **took care** of the poor, the orphans, the sick, and the widows.

But the **power of their leaders** over the community, and all their **complex rules** made the people **dependent** on the *Corrupted Synagogues*.

The **Rabbis** were respected by those who depended on them.

They **quoted selected Scriptures**, and boasted of having great **scholars**, so they *appeared* to be wise.

The **true believers** in the Christian Gospel were **forced to separate** and **start their own churches**.

After Paul left, false teachers slipped into the new Christian churches and were confusing the Gospel.

They thought that **salvation** also depended on *the old rituals*, and *human efforts*.

They talked about **God's grace** - but it **wasn't grace alone**. If it's not *grace alone*, it's **not grace at all**.

When the **Christian message started to spread** in the Jewish communities, **believers** had to make **hard choices**.

By **admitting their trust** in Jesus Christ they **lost the benefits** the Synagogues offered.

They were **cut off socially**, in *business*, and *lost support* for the needy among them.

The Synagogues didn't just cut them off, they saw the Gospel of Christ as a threat.

They **attacked the leaders of the church**, and tried to *discredit* the teaching of the **Apostles**.

They said **Paul** had been **deluded** by the other **Apostles**, **then turned against even them**.

**Answering** these personal attacks was **one of the reasons** Paul wrote **this letter** to the churches of Galatia.

But there's more in this letter than just that.

**Some** who joined the new churches were **still sympathetic** with the **Main-Line-Synagogues**.

The **understanding** of some of the early believers was **immature** and **uninformed**.

*Judaizers* tried to **mix these two different ways of salvation together**.

Many popular churches today make similar mistakes.

They believe **that God's grace depends** on our **choices and decisions**.

They teach **that until sinners give God permission** to save them, they **can't be saved**.

**Human effort** and **human decisions** are **still confusing the gospel of Grace**.

The **principle** Paul is dealing with in this Epistle is **very important now** as always.

**God's spiritual enemies** always present a **modified gospel** which is **not a gospel at all**.

Galatians chapter 2 gets right to the **heart of these issues**.

In **Chapter 1**, Paul explained how **amazed** he was that **some of them were so easily confused**.

He **reminded** them that it **wasn't the influence of the Apostles** that **changed his mind** about Christ.

**God** had **spoken** to him *directly* by the **appearing of the Resurrected Christ**

while he was on his way to persecute Christian believers in Damascus.

By a work of **God's grace alone**, he **became a promoter** of the Christian Faith he once persecuted.

He **didn't go to Jerusalem** to meet other **Apostles** for about **3 years after** his conversion.

His point **couldn't** have been said **more clearly and directly**: **God gave him his message**.

Now in **Chapter 2** he explained **more about his relationship with the other Apostles and their message.**

He begins by telling them about his trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.

1. Then after fourteen years I went **up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas**, taking **Titus** along with me.
2. I went up **because of a revelation** and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) **the gospel** that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

**Barnabas** was a **Christian**. By birth he was a **Levite**, a member of the priestly family of Israel. He'd been **sent** by the Christian Church in Jerusalem to **lead the church in Antioch of Syria**. He'd traveled **with Paul** on his **First Missionary Journey**.

**Titus** was a **Gentile** who had come to Christ.

He was a **leader** of the **new churches** on the Island of Crete.

After about a decade and a half God directed Paul to take these two men with him to Jerusalem.

He was sent to **communicate** to the believers there about **the Gospel** he'd been **preaching to the Gentiles**.

**Questions and accusations** were circulating.

Lies were told about the **message** he brought to the **non-Jews in the Gentile regions**.

So Paul made it clear that even in Jerusalem the **Apostles didn't expect Gentiles to follow the old rituals**.

3. But even **Titus**, who was with me, **was not forced to be circumcised**, though he was a Greek.

God made **Circumcision** to be the **sign and seal of his covenant until** the coming of **Christ**.

Those **symbolic rituals** were **no longer meaningful** since **Jesus fulfilled** what they represented.

**Titus was respected** by these Apostles as a **full member** of the Church **without** having to be **circumcised**.

**There's only one Gospel.**

It's the **promise of Grace**, that **God** would send a **Redeemer** to **pay** for his **people's sins**.

**Christ** would **take their guilt**, and **credit them with his own righteousness**.

This Gospel had **been represented** by the **Sacrifices and Jewish Rituals before Jesus came**.

**But after that** it was all **fulfilled** by the **one all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus**.

**Redemption and God's Covenant** were now to be **represented** in a **different way**:

**Baptism** and the **Lord's Supper replaced** the old signs and seals of the Covenant.

These **new sacraments represented the same things** the old ones represented.

The **good news** is always that **redemption is the work of God's Grace alone**.

**What believers do** is the **result**, not the **cause**, of the **new life** they have in **Christ their Savior**.

Then in verses 4-5 Paul explained the challenge he was dealing with.

4. Yet because of **false brothers** secretly brought in--

who slipped in to spy out our **freedom that we have in Christ Jesus**, so that they might bring us into slavery--

5. **to them we did not yield in submission** even for a moment,

so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

These **false brothers** had **infiltrated** the churches to **gather information** for their attacks.

They were **not true brothers** in Christ, but **used his name** and **claimed** to be believers.

These false brothers **openly argued** against what Paul and the other Apostles taught.

They **wanted the old covenant signs to continue** because of their **distorted understanding of God's law**.

**Instead of believing that** the ceremonial laws and rituals of the Temple era **were fulfilled** in Christ, they **insisted they were necessary** for salvation, and **should continue** in the church.

They infiltrated to spy out how they could **better oppose** the gospel of "**grace alone**".

They attacked the gospel idea of "**freedom in Christ**" as if it meant **freedom from** all **God said** in the past.

They **missed the whole point** that in Christ we're **set free from the condemnation of the law**,

We're **set free from the rituals** which had **now completed** their purpose.

The **law of God still and always reveals sin**, exposes **spiritual death**, and **directs us how to live for God's glory**. **Jesus submitted to the condemnation of the law** on the cross in **our place**, and made us his people by **grace**.

**There's nothing evil about the law of God.**

But to **believe** that any human work **contributes to our salvation**

is a **total contradiction** of the **message of Scripture** in both the Old and New Testaments.

That was **never the purpose of the law** to begin with.

This is what **Jesus said** to those deceived scholars in **Matthew 22:29**,  
He said, "**You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.**"

**The true Christian Gospel does what the law could never do.**

The **moral laws of Moses showed what pleases God.**

The **ritual laws foreshadowed what God promised** in the coming Christ.

The freedom we have in Christ is our **enablement by grace alone** to **finally see the truth** in Scripture,  
and to **begin to have the right motive** in living for God's glory.

**Paul, his companions, and the Jerusalem Apostles didn't yield to this confusion** for even a moment.

These **ceremonial laws** had **nothing to do with** God's **eternal moral principles**.

They were **strictly redemptive symbols** God required in the time **before the Messiah** came.

To **require them after the cross**, would be to **deny the complete sufficiency of the life and work of Jesus**.

The Apostles understood **how vital this message of grace is** in **preserving the Good News** about Christ.

**But what a great truth it is that God looks on us with a love undeserved.**

There is **nothing in us** that can either **earn our salvation**, or **cause us to lose it once we really have it**.

**Our Savior, Jesus Christ, paid it all and calls us to himself**, and will **never let us go**.

**When we struggle** with our own weaknesses, when **our loved ones** are hurting and confused,  
when **all seems lost or insurmountable -- God is there** as our **Loving Redeemer and Lord**.

**Our own efforts** neither **earn his love**, nor **alienate us from it**.

**We are alive by grace alone** through the **faith he puts in** our otherwise **foolish hearts**.

**Because of that**, we undeserving creatures **rest in the perfect work of Christ**.

*That never lets us fall short of God's eternal mercies which never fail.*

The **modified gospels** so many have preached down through the ages, and **still preach today**,  
**are no gospel at all**, as Paul said in the beginning of this letter.

**Paul and the others** who led the faithful churches in the First Century **saw the problem**.

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**So Paul set the record straight so the believers in Galatia would understand.**

6. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me;  
God shows no partiality)--those, I say, who seemed influential **added nothing to me**.

7. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised,  
just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

8. (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised  
worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

9. and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, **perceived the grace that was given to me**,  
they gave the **right hand of fellowship** to Barnabas and me,  
that we should **go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised**.

10. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

**Paul was talking about the Apostles in Jerusalem.**

The **enemies of grace** seemed to see these **Apostles** as **self-promoters** with great power in the church.

They made that **mistake as if the Apostles always promoted themselves**.

That like their Priests and Rabbis they **saw themselves** as **great men** who stood above the rest.

But **Paul reminds** us that **that's not the way it is** with church leadership.

**God sees us all as his children, sinners** unworthy except by his saving us through Christ.

These **seemingly important leaders in Jerusalem** were **just men redeemed** the same as all believers.

They **had apostolic authority**, and the **Elders** of the church had authority too,

**but they weren't there independently of what God himself made them to be.**

**Godly leaders are to humbly guide the people to glorify God, not to glorify themselves.**

It was **clear**, even to the other Apostles,

that **Paul's ministry was valid**, and **consistent with their own message**.

God had called **Peter** to bring the **good news** to the **Jews** that their Messiah had come.

But **Paul** was called to take the **same message** to the **Gentiles** who had no background in Scripture.

But it was the *same truth, the same salvation.*

Those who were **considered** by some as the "*Pillars of the Church*" (verse 9) **agreed** with Paul. **James, Peter** (called by his Hebrew name Cephas here), and **John** clearly accepted Paul.

When they **heard the facts**, and **met with Paul privately**,  
they **received Paul and Barnabas** into fellowship, and **fully recognize** their ministry to the Gentiles.

What Paul told them was *good news* to the leaders in Jerusalem.

The **Gospel** was going **beyond the boundaries** of those **born as Jews**.

This was *exactly* what **God had promised** to the Patriarchs and through the prophets.

There was **no need to correct** Paul, and there was **no new information** they were able to give him.  
Instead, to the frustration of their critics,

**the leaders** of the church *rejoiced* in what **Paul had done and taught**.

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The Apostles left Paul and his co-workers with an important final reminder:

10. Only, they asked us to **remember the poor**, the very thing **I was eager to do**.

The **critics** of Paul made it **hard** for the **faithful Christians** who wouldn't compromise their faith.

The **big Synagogues expelled believers** and **cut off help** to their needy loved ones,  
so the **smaller new Christian churches** became **burdened** with an **enormous challenge**.

They **didn't have large funds and investments** to take over **care** of those **unable to work**:  
the *sick*, the *disabled*, the *orphans* and the *widows*.

This is why the *office of Deacon* had been set up for the church in **Acts 6**.

The **teachers** of the new churches **were overburdened**.

They **needed leadership** in conducting the **mercy ministries** to the **brave followers of Christ**.

**Social ministries** are **not the Gospel** - but they are the *results of the Gospel* in the lives of those redeemed.

When the **Jerusalem Apostles recognized Paul's faithfulness** to the truth God had made known,  
it was **reasonable** that they **commented on this need** they were facing in the **new local churches**.

This was **never just an intellectual doctrinal issue**. They should **remember to care for the poor too**.

**When God's truth is compromised**, when **his character and worship are distorted**,  
**it effects the daily lives** of believers and their families.

It means **real sacrifice** of *time, money* and *personal comforts*.

**Though it was costly** to separate from the Synagogues, it was a **price** they were **willing to pay**.

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The True Church is gathered from many backgrounds and diverse personal interests.

But together, **united** by a **deep love for God**, for **one another**, and for **his truth**, they are a *true spiritual family*.

The **church is the center of caring** for one another, and for **preserving the teachings and work of our Savior**.

In writing in **Ephesians 4:14-15**, Paul described the **deep inner love that unites us and drives us**:

14. **so that we may no longer be children**, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,  
by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

15. **Rather, speaking the truth in love**, we are to **grow up** in every way **into him** who is the head, into **Christ**,

**All through human history**;

under the power of Empires, Dictatorships, and corrupted elected leaders,  
through hard economic times, periods of horrible violence, disasters, and moral decline,  
through heresies, popularly distorted versions of the gospel, and open unbelief,  
**the true church has persevered**, and has **rallied to care for one another** as those who are redeemed.

**The gospel** is **more than just evangelism** of the unsaved,  
it's the **ministry of the risen Christ to those redeemed by God's grace**.

He **commissions each of us**, even those who sometimes take the church for granted,  
to **spend our time, efforts and resources**, to **gather the lost** into the spiritual family as they trust in the gospel,  
to **befriend them**, and then to **care for them**.

**The church** isn't just another **worship agency, mission board, social network, or charity**.  
It's the *Kingdom of God*, and a *responsible spiritual family*.

We stand together **united** though we have different backgrounds, decades, and experiences.



We are a *spiritual family* that will **spend all of eternity united** in the presence of our Savior.  
We treasure and share the *real answer* to the **needs that trouble, confuse, and deceive** human hearts.

The gospel of Christ **really sets us free ...**

**not free from the moral principles and promises of God's word,  
but free to glorify God in all things, and to enjoy him forever.**

Note: Bible quotations are from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

### Galatians 2:1-10 (ESV)

1. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.
2. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.
3. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.
4. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery--
5. to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.
6. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.
7. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised
8. (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),
9. and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.
10. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

1. Ἐπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν πάλιν ἀνέβην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρνάβαν, συμπαραλαβὼν καὶ Τίτον·
2. ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν· καὶ ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρύσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσι, μήπως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον.
3. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί, Ἕλλην ὢν, ἠναγκάσθη περιτομηθῆναι,
4. διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους, οἵτινες παρεισήλθον κατασκοπεῖσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἣν ἔχομεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσωνται·
5. οἷς οὐδὲ πρὸς ὥραν εἶξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ, ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου διαμείνη πρὸς ὑμᾶς.
6. ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι, ὁποῖοί ποτε ἦσαν οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει· πρόσωπον Θεοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει· ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο,
7. ἀλλὰ τὸναντίον ἰδόντες ὅτι πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας καθὼς Πέτρος τῆς περιτομῆς·
8. ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς ἐνήργησε καὶ ἐμοὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη·
9. καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἐμοὶ καὶ Βαρνάβαν κοινωνίας, ἵνα ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομὴν·
10. μόνον τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν, ὃ καὶ ἐσπούδασα αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι.

- 1 Then after fourteen years I went **up again to Jerusalem** with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.
- 2 And I went up **by revelation**, and **communicated** to them **that gospel** which I preach **among the Gentiles**, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.
- 3 Yet **not even Titus** who was with me, being a Greek, was **compelled to be circumcised**.
- 4 And this occurred because of **false brethren** secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),
- 5 **to whom we did not yield submission** even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.
- 6 But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something **added nothing to me**.
- 7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter
- 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),
- 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, **perceived the grace that had been given to me**, they gave me and Barnabas the **right hand of fellowship**, that we should **go to the Gentiles** and they to the circumcised.
- 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

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Title: **The Church Challenged**

Description: The early church suffered from persecution, social rejection, and financial hardships. Those redeemed should stand together as a spiritual family to care for one another as the Gospel of Grace brings in the lost from different backgrounds by the work of our Sovereign and Merciful God. (Galatians 2:1-10)

tags: bible, theology, Galatians, grace, law

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